



MONTANA WIC RETAILER NEWS

April/May 2009

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Formula Changes

“Similac Advance” is slightly changing its formulation and name to “Similac Advance Early Shield”. This product is a replacement product and will be available to distributors in April 2009. With the exception of the addition of a shield with the words, “Early Shield” and a darker blue color, the packaging will remain the same.



Thank You, Retailers!

The following stores were the first to submit completed February price surveys to this office. (These surveys are entirely completed, correct, signed and on time.) Thank you for your time and efforts!

Big Horn IGA — Hardin

Milligan's IGA —

Absarokee

K's Supermarket —

Stanford

Checks issued for “Similac Advance” may be used to purchase “Similac Advance Early Shield”. Checks issued for “Similac Advance Early Shield” may be used to buy “Similac Advance”. We will change the name on the checks in June, more in line with when the actual product will appear on your shelves.

Also, Similac Sensitive RS, which currently only comes in ready-to-feed (RTF), has released powdered and concentrate formats to distributors. Retailers with a large supply of the RTF should work with the WIC local agency to determine how much RTF formula to order in the future.

Compliance Buy Notes

Compliance buys are being performed, in accordance with federal regulations. Compliance buys are covert purchases of WIC food items, designed to determine if program fraud or abuse is going on in your business.

One problem we are finding is that the investigators are NOT being asked for their ID packet. Your staff must ask for the ID packet to ensure the name on the check is on the packet and, at the end of the purchase, to compare the signature on the check to that on the ID packet. It is not enough to see that the customer has an ID packet. Please remind your staff to check the ID packets for names and signatures.

Please verify that the correct formula is purchased. We have found that both the wrong brand (Isomil instead of Similac Advance) and the wrong format (powdered instead of concentrate) are being purchased. For example, if a cashier allows 31 cans of powdered formula (\$18 per can) to be purchased in place of concentrate (\$4 per can), we will only authorize payment for what was on the check (\$124). This means a loss of \$434 to you. Please train your staff to carefully read the check and ensure the correct product is purchased.

Check Review Letter

A letter dated April 21, 2009, was mailed to all retailers concerning a change in the review process of WIC checks cashed either “Too Early” or “Too Late”. It stated that if a check was accepted at the store before the “First Day to Use” or after the “Last Day to Use”, it would no longer be approved for payment. This refers to checks rejected by the WIC bank for date errors.

Please ensure your staff carefully checks those dates before accepting the WIC checks!

DHA Infant Cereal

WIC checks are bouncing because participants are buying infant cereal with DHA. This cereal is at least twice as expensive as the regular infant cereal.

Only plain infant cereal is WIC authorized. Please instruct your staff to only allow the purchase of the plain cereal.

Participant Complaints

Sometimes milk is not sold as quickly as anticipated, and stores are forced to put milk on sale because the “Sell By” date is close. WIC participants are to be given the choice whether or not to buy this milk. If they chose not to buy the sale milk, allow them to purchase the next least-expensive milk.

The substitution of two half-gallons of milk for 1 gallon is allowable. We use the data on the price survey to set your prices. We take the reported amount for a half-gallon of milk, double it, and use it for the gallon prices. If you keep your prices updated, this substitution should not be a problem. Call the State WIC office at 800-433-4298, option 2, with your updates.

Positive customer relations are important to a successful business. The cashiers are the most common contact point in your store. They must act in a professional and courteous manner to all customers. If a problem arises with a WIC customer, please complete the green complaint form and mail it to the State office. We will work with you and the local agency to resolve these problems.

Formula Purchase Sites

Federal policies require State WIC agencies to publish a “List of Formula Wholesalers, Distributors, Retailers, and Manufacturers” from which retailers can purchase their infant formula. This is to ensure that the formula has not been compromised. The 2009 list is attached to this newsletter.

Please verify that your purchase site is on the list. If not, contact the State WIC office with the name, address and phone number of your source.

The list will be distributed at least once a year, or when changes are made.

Use of WIC Symbol or Acronym

A policy, recently issued by USDA, contained a reminder that the WIC symbol and acronym (“WIC”) are service marks owned by the USDA, and may **NOT** be used in any advertisements or marketing by food manufacturers or stores.

The service mark can only be used on materials approved by the Montana WIC Program, such as the “We Accept WIC Checks” sign. Shelf-tags or channel strips with the service mark must have the written permission of the Montana WIC Program, and be used to properly identify WIC authorized foods.

Should you have questions on this matter, please contact the State WIC office.

Common Questions

Q. Are bite-size Mini-Wheats authorized? The picture on the food list shows the “Big Bite” size.

A. Both the “Big Bite” and the “Bite Size” Mini-Wheats are authorized.

Q. Is cranberry juice authorized?

A. NO. Most cranberry products are juice cocktails, which is higher in sugar. Only allow the juices on the WIC Approved Food List.

Q. Are juice blends or juice combinations allowed?

A. NO. Only allow the single juices on the WIC Approved Food List.

Common Check Errors

Our reports indicate that the two most common check errors for the last three-month period are “No Signature” and “Missing/Illegible Retailer Stamp”. Both of these are preventable errors.

Please emphasize to your staff the need to have the checks signed. It is the cashier’s responsibility to ensure the WIC checks are signed after the ‘Amount of Purchase’ is written on the check. They need to double-check for the signature before putting the check in the till.

Remind your bookkeepers that they **MUST** have the retailer stamp on every WIC check. The WIC bank uses the stamp number to ensure funds are deposited in the correct account. If your stamp is becoming difficult to read, try a new stamp pad or contact the State WIC office for a new stamp.

Retailer Updates

The following stores have changed owners or are new to the WIC Program since the last newsletter:

Littlehorn IGA – Lodge Grass

Reese & Ray’s IGA Plus
– Laurel (formerly Jan’s IGA)

Sykes Grocery & Market
– Kalispell

Trout Creek Local Store
– Trout Creek



Montana WIC
Retailer News
is targeted for
distribution in
January, April,
July, and
October.

INFORMATION TO SHARE?

Do you have information or suggestions you would like to share with other retailers? Please contact:

*Retail Services
Montana WIC Program
Cogswell Bldg, Rm C305
P O Box 202951
Helena MT 59620-2951*

Fax: 406-444-0239

The Montana WIC Program is scheduled to be closed on the following days:

Mon, May 25—Memorial Day
Fri, July 3—Independence Day (celebrated)

What Do You Know About WIC?

MINIMUM QUANTITIES

Federal regulations mandate that minimum quantities and varieties of WIC-authorized foods be in stock at all times. The minimum stocking requirement can be found on Appendix B of the current Retailer Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding. A copy is available upon request from the State WIC Office.

TRAINING

Retailers are responsible for training their staff in WIC check-cashing procedures. WIC retailers are encouraged to call either the State or Local WIC Agencies with any questions on check-cashing procedures. State or local agency WIC staff is available to do on-site training, if requested by the store management.

REVIEWING THE WIC CHECK

Check-out staff should review the WIC check before beginning to process the purchase. They should first check that the date range is current, the WIC check has not been signed, and that no corrections have been made on the WIC check.

PROCESSING THE WIC CHECK

Cashiers should process the items in the order they appear on the check, ensuring that the correct quantity and items are being purchased. Cashiers may 'check-mark' the items on the check as they are processed to ensure items are not forgotten or left in the shopping cart. Only one check may be cashed at a time, and must be processed as a separate order. WIC checks may NOT be stapled together. The WIC participant may use coupons or store cards to reduce the price, IF your store accepts these items. Please remember that no cash may be used in a WIC transaction.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN ALL ITS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, GENDER, RELIGION, AGE, DISABILITY, OR POLITICAL BELIEFS. (NOT ALL PROHIBITED BASES APPLY TO ALL PROGRAMS.) PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WHO REQUIRE ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR COMMUNICATION OF PROGRAM INFORMATION (BRAILLE, LARGE PRINT, AUDIOTAPES, ETC.) SHOULD CONTACT USDA'S TARGET CENTER AT (202) 720-2600 (VOICE AND TDD.)

TO FILE A COMPLAINT OF DISCRIMINATION, WRITE USDA, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS, ROOM 326-W, WHITTEN BUILDING, 14TH AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW, WASHINGTON D.C. 20250-9410 OR CALL (202) 720-5964 (VOICE AND TDD.) USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

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